

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 204518
ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY AF/S:KMCCORMICK:LFS
APPROVED BY AF:WBEDMONDSON
AF/S:DKEOGH
AF/I:WLEWIS
EUR/NE:JWORRELL
P:DTICE
PM/SAS:DHESTER
S/S:TGMARTIN

-----078880 262222Z /62

R 261948Z AUG 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON
INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

S E C R E T STATE 204518

STADIS////////////////////
EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MASS, BC, UK

SUBJECT:SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR BOTSWANA

REF: (A) GABORONE 1927, (B) GABORONE 1645, (C) GABORONE
1894

1. SENIOR BOTSWANA OFFICIALS, IN WHAT THEY DESCRIBE AS A
CONSCIOUS POLITICAL DECISION, HAVE TURNED TO THE US TO
REQUEST ARMS FOR BOTSWANA'S FLEDGLING DEFENSE FORCE. A
READY RESPONSE IS COMPLICATED BY THE DILEMMA BETWEEN US
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SYMPATHY FOR A THREATENED, DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY'S LEGITIMATE
NEEDS AND THE PRESIDENT'S STATED DESIRE TO REDUCE OVERALL
US ARMS SALES AND MINIMIZE NEW MILITARY SUPPLY RELATION-
SHIPS. WHILE MAKING CLEAR ITS PREFERENCE FOR US SOURCES,

BOTSWANA HAS ALSO APPROACHED THE BRITISH FOR MILITARY TRAINING AND COMMERCIAL WEAPONS SALES.

2. IN JUNE 1 MEETING WITH UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE HABIB, HMG MINISTER OF STATE ROWLANDS REAFFIRMED INTEREST OF HMG IN PROVIDING BOTSWANA WITH MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN FORM OF TRAINING, ORGANIZATION AND LIMITED COMMERCIAL SALES. REF (A) ENCOURAGES DEPT TO BELIEVE THAT JUST-COMPLETED UK MILITARY MISSION TO BOTSWANA MIGHT BE PREPARED TO RECOMMEND BRITISH PROVISION OF EQUIPMENT INCLUDING LOW-SOPHISTICATION WEAPONS, VEHICLES AND UNIFORMS TO BOTSWANA ON EITHER CASH OR CREDIT BASIS.

3. A SIGNIFICANT BRITISH ROLE IN HELPING MEET BOTSWANA'S DEFENSE NEEDS WOULD BE MOST WELCOME. IT WOULD:

A) RESPOND TO UN FARAH COMMISSION'S APPEAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AID TO HELP BOTSWANA MINIMIZE DAMAGE TO ITS DEVELOPMENT BUDGET CAUSED BY NEED TO CREATE DEFENSE FORCES;

B) FORCEFULLY ASSERT UK'S CONTINUING DETERMINATION PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IN SUPPORT OF THREATENED FORMER BRITISH TERRITORY AND TRADITIONAL CUSTOMER;

C) NOT LEAST, EASE USG'S PROBLEMS WITH ENTERING INTO NEW ARMS SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP IN AFRICA AT A TIME WHEN US POLICY ON THIS POINT BECOMING MORE RESTRICTIVE.

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4. WE ARE AWARE THAT ABOVE REASONING DOES NOT MEAN HMG NECESSARILY ANXIOUS TO GO FURTHER THAN ALREADY INDICATED IN PROVIDING DEFENSE EQUIPMENT TO BOTSWANA. IN ADDITION TO COSTS, REF (B) SUGGESTS BRITISH CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE ADVERSE BLACK AFRICAN OPINION, ALTHOUGH IN VIEW FARAH REPORT SOURCE OF CONCERN IS NOT CLEAR. HOWEVER, BEFORE GOING FURTHER WITH US RESPONSE TO BOTSWANA'S REQUEST, DEPT WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD THAT BRITISH COULD BE PERSUADED TO SHARE ANY SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF BURDEN. WE LEAVE TO EMBASSY'S DISCRETION APPROACHING FCO AT THIS STAGE ON ANY OR ALL OF ABOVE IN DEVELOPING REQUESTED ASSESSMENT. CHRISTOPHER

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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, SECURITY
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 26-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: KMCCORMICK:LFS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Expiration:
Film Number: D770316-1138
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Image Path:
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Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON MICROFILM, TEXT ON-LINE
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Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, STADIS
Reference: 77 GABORONE 1927, 77 GABORONE 1645, GABORONE 1894
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1440538
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 970908; srp 970908; srp 970908
Subject: SECURITY ASSISTANCE FOR BOTSWANA
TAGS: MASS, PINS, BC, UK, US
To: LONDON INFO GABORONE MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b776b350-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009